

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Replace the paragraph bridging pages 15 and 16 with the following amended paragraph:

The microbial support layer may be designed to have an open cell size that is suitable for microbial ingrowth ("microbial ingrowth" means the act of microbes growing or forming inward, which in this case is into the microbial support layer). Often, it will be desirable that the support layer be hydrophilic so that it is wetted by the aqueous solution. If the microbial support layer is prepared from a hydrophobic polymer (e.g. a polyolefin), it can be made hydrophilic. One method to render a hydrophobic support hydrophilic is described in concurrently filed and co-pending U.S. Patent No. 6,878,419 ~~Application having Serial No. \_\_\_\_\_~~ (filed on the same date as present application, and having Attorney's Docket No. 56783US002), which is incorporated herein by reference. Another method of rendering a hydrophobic support hydrophilic is coating the web with a hydrophilic polymer as described, for example, in U.S. Patent No. 6,042,877 (Lyon et al.) (which is incorporated herein by reference) (other coating methods may be used as well). Another method is the surface graft polymerization of hydrophilic polymer chains onto the support using ultraviolet or ionizing radiation, plasma discharge, or ozone treatment in the presence of a hydrophilic monomer, methods for which are well known in the art. (See, for example, H. Yamagishi, J. V. Crivello and G. Belfort, *Journal of Membrane Science*, 105 (1995), 237-247). Yet another method to prepare a hydrophilic support layer predominantly from a hydrophobic material is incorporation of a surface-active additive having a hydrophilic chemical group into the base polymer. Surface-active additives useful for this purpose include fluoroaliphatic-group containing nonionic surfactants, polyoxyethylene group-containing nonionic surfactants, and fatty acid monoglycerides. Examples of the use of such additives to prepare hydrophilic, fibrous materials of the type suitable for the present invention are provided in WO 97/44508 (Temperante et al.) and WO 00/71789 (Dunshee et al.) (which are incorporated herein by reference). Many suitable surface-active additives are available, and the above list is intended to be exemplary only. Hydrophilic support layers can also be prepared using a sheath-core blown microfiber construction (see, for example, WO 00/43579 (Lindquist et al.), which is incorporated herein by reference). Using this method, a nonwoven support can be constructed from fibers having an inner core comprising a predominantly hydrophobic material and an outer sheath comprising a hydrophilic polymer or a hydrophilic, surface-active additive.